DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 378 134 SP 035 634

AUTHOR Brown, James; Harris, Whitney G.
TITLE Enhancing the Diversity of the Pool of Teachers.
PUB DATE Oct 94
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Meeting of the SRATE (Baltimore, MD, October 1994).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College School Cooperation; *Education Courses; Education Majors; Higher Education; High Schools; High School Seniors; Males; *Minority Groups; Preservice Teacher Education; Program Development; Program Evaluation; Schools of Education; *Teacher Education Programs; *Teacher Recruitment
IDENTIFIERS Calcasieu Parish School System LA; *Diversity (Faculty); *McNeese State University LA

ABSTRACT

The McNeese State University-LaGrange High School Teacher Recruitment Project in Lake Charles, Louisiana, seeks to increase the number of minorities enrolled in the university's teacher education program, with special emphasis on recruiting males of color. In Louisiana, students of color comprise 43 percent of public school enrollment while faculty and staff comprise 5.2 percent, and the number of students of color seeking admission to teacher education programs is decreasing. To encourage students of color to enroll in teacher education, the project offers education courses, with college and high school credit, to qualified seniors at LaGrange High School. The two courses are taught by an African-American high school teacher with the assistance of university professors. The courses, "Introduction to Education" and "Seminar for Teachers' Aides" include classroom instruction, field trips, speakers, and field experiences. The project also aims to increase students' awareness of the teaching profession, the social and community role of education, and the role that education plays in national and global development. Program evaluation data indicate that completion of the two courses increased participants' awareness of the teaching profession, and 22 percent of the students from the first class stated that their career goal was to become a teacher. (Contains 13 references.) (JDD)

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Enhancing the Diversity of the Pool of Teachers

presented by

James Brown & Whitney G. Harris
McNeese State University
Lake Charles, LA

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October, 1994

SB35634

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ENHANCING THE DIVERSITY OF THE POOL OF TEACHERS

James Brown & Whitney Harris

Burton College of Education
McNeese State University
Lake Charles, LA

(a) Introduction

In the USA, as in all countries, a key element in the national development formula is an effective education. A well-prepared teaching corps is a prerequisite for effective education. Stedman (1987) and Edmond (1982) and others have argued that, at least in the USA, one element of an effective school is cultural diversity. While Stedman primarily focuses on diversity among the students, Graham (1987), has argued that there is a need for faculty diversity. She has argued that there is a real need for African-American teachers. Faculty-staff diversity is as important as student diversity.

This paper describes a program, **McNeese State University--LaGrange High School Teacher Recruitment Project**[1], that seeks to enhance the diversity of the pool of professional educators. The primary goal of this project is to increase the number of minorities enrolled in the university's teacher education program. Special emphasis is placed on recruiting males of color.

The first section of this paper presents a brief review of the problem of minority teacher recruitment. The second section describes the program. The third presents data from the

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[1]Drs. James Brown, Jocelyn Rees, Judy Shaver, William Sumrall and Beth Wise served on the committee that initiated this project.

preliminary project evaluation and final section offers some recommendations.

(b) Problem

The percentage of minority public schools students is undergoing a dramatic increase. Nationally, these students are of African-American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American ancestry (Greer, 1989). Many are second, third, and fourth generation Americans while others are recent arrivals. This is especially true of the Hispanic students (Nieto, 1986). In the state of Louisiana, the site of this project, students of color comprise approximately forty-three (43 %), percent of the public school enrollment (Education that Works, 1990).

Paradoxically, while the public school student body is increasing in diversity, the public school faculty and staff is becoming more homogeneous (Geer, 1986). The percentage of African-American public school teachers decreased from 8.0 percent in 1976 to 5.2 percent in 1991 (NEA, 1992). At the same time, the number of students of color seeking admission to teacher education programs is decreasing (Bell & Morsink, 1986; Graham, 1987; & Reed, 1986). Also, only eight (8 %) percent of African-American teachers is below the age of thirty (Choy, 1993). Approximately, 12.6 percent of the students currently enrolled in McNeese .State University's Department of Curriculum and Instruction; 14.2 percent of the students in the Department of Health and Human Performance are students of color and 17 percent of those in the Department of Special Education are students of color.

Department	African-American		White	
Curr & Instr	128	12.6%	872	85.7%[2]
H & HP	47	14.2%	276	83.1%
Psychology	47	17.0%	216	78.3%
Special Education	22	15.5%	117	82.3%

Clearly, then, the shortage of teachers of color hampers the development of an effective system of education. Those segments of the community that are the most underdeveloped are poorly represented in the country's pool of current and future teachers. The primary purpose of this project is to encourage students of color to enroll in our teacher education program.

(c) Program Description

Haberman (1989) found that a review of the research on the best practices for recruiting minorities into teacher education showed that an effective technique is "getting an early start." This project attempts to "get an early start" by offering, for college and high school credit, two education courses to qualified twelfth grade students.

McNeese State University's Burton College of Education and LaGrange High School entered a joint teacher recruitment agreement. LaGrange High School's qualified twelfth grade students may enroll

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[2]A small percentage of the students in each category was classified as other. This explains why the total is less than 100 percent.

in the university courses, **Introduction to Education** and **Seminar for Teachers' Aides**. The courses include classroom instruction, field trips, speakers, and field experiences. Students enrolled in the courses also serve as teachers' aides at their high school and at a local elementary school. The course is taught by a qualified high school teacher with the assistance of a team of professors from the Burton College of Education. An African-American teacher was chosen as instructor because the project designers felt that an instructor of color would be a good role model for students from under-represented group. University professors are frequent presenters in the classroom phase of the project.

LaGrange High School was chosen as the pilot school because the diversity of the student body approximates that of the community. The percentage of students of color is about 45 percent. Thus, the pool of perspective student recruits for the project was high.

In 1994 the program was expanded to two additional schools. One Washington-Marion Magnet High School is an urban school. Its student body is over 95 % African-American. The other school is DeRidder High School. It is a predominantly white school located in a small town. Approximately, 20 % of the student body is African-American.

Although the primary purpose of the course is to recruit minorities into the field of education, the joint venture is also designed to increase the students' awareness of the teaching profession, the social and community role of education, and the

role that education plays in national and global development. To achieve these goals, a major class project is sponsoring a career fair. This event allows the students to view the role of education in settings other than the classroom. Their contact with business and professional people also helps them to understand the role that education plays in the business and professional worlds.

This joint venture is approved by the Calcasieu Parish School System and by the Louisiana Department of Education. Since its inception in 1992, thirty-six students have participated in the program. Forty percent of the students are from under-represented groups. Currently, forty-eight students, at three schools, participate in the project.

(d) Preliminary Project Evaluation[3]

Although the project has not been operative long enough to decide if it is achieving its primary goal--increasing the number of students of color choosing education as a field of study--both summative and formative evaluation data is being collected. Both formal data collection techniques and informal anecdotal information are used. The following is a review of some of that data.

Two survey instruments are used to collect relevant information about the program. **Survey Form** I (SFI),[4] was given to

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[3]The data for this evaluation are from students who attended LaGrange High School. Data are currently being collected from the other schools.

[4]SFI was developed by Dr. William Sumrall, Mississippi State University. SFII is a version of SFI. It was prepared by the author in conjunction with Sumrall.

the first class at the end of the first semester of the academic years. **Survey Form** II (SFII), was mailed to both classes at the end of the second year of the project. The following is a review of the data.

Of the students completing SFI 40.90 percent **strongly agreed** that "the primary reason that I (they), have decided or am thinking about becoming a teacher is the time off from work during holidays and summer." Of the respondents on SFII, a clear eighty (80 %) percent **strongly agreed** with the above statement.[5] To the statement, "The primary reason people become teachers is the time off during the summer and holidays," 59.9 percent of the SFI's respondents **strongly agreed** and 33.33 percent of the respondents on SFII **strongly agreed.**

A major objective of the project is to increase the awareness of the teaching profession. Eighty percent of the SFII respondents **strongly agreed** that the "completion of the two education courses" had increased their awareness of the teaching profession. Given that the SFII group of respondents represents both classes, this is an important achievement. One student said that although he did not feel that he would become a teacher, "the experience gave him information that he would eventually need to be a good parent."

Other student comments on this issue included, "It inform us about education and its place in the nation at the present time." Another commented that "It may encourage me to become a teacher.

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[5]Forty-seven percent of the respondents of SFII were from the first class and 53 percent were from the second class.

It also helped me to understand all the duties and responsibilities of a teacher." Finally, one student said, "I am also learning a lot about the United States' educational system."

This project assumes that the students' general perception of the educational enterprise plays a role in the decision that they make regarding education as a career. Their responses to the statement, "Our educational system as a whole has declined over the past thirty years" gives some insight into their perception of education. Of the **SFII** respondents 26.66 percent **agreed somewhat** with the statement and 33.33 percent of them **disagreed somewhat.** Only 6.66 percent **strongly agreed** that our education system is in decline. Conversely, 36.36 percent of the respondents on **SFI strongly agreed** that our educational system is in decline. In Sum, 54.54 percent of the **SFI** respondents and 33.32 percent of the **SFII** respondents **agreed** or **strongly agreed** that education in the United States is in decline.

Additional research is need to determine the validity of the assumption that there is a relationship between students' perception of education and their choice or lack of education as a career field. Because students of color tend to have more negative school experiences, e.g., lower grade point averages, more discipline problems and higher dropout rates, if this assumption is correct, this finding may partially explain the decline in the number of students from under-represented groups that choose careers in education (Graham, 1987).

An interesting finding on **SFII** is that over fifty percent

(53.33%), of the respondents felt that there is a need for more teachers of color and forty (40 %) percent believed that there is a need for more male teachers. Given that less than twenty (20 %), percent of the students was from under-represented groups, it is significant that these percentages are high. This implies that even majority race students sense the need for teachers of color.

As stated early, the experience is not sufficiently mature to have provided hard data. However, there are some positive indications that the project is achieving its goals. For example, 22 percent of the students from the first class stated that their career goal was to become a teacher. An equally important goal, providing future citizens with a broader, better informed knowledge based about education, is 100 % successful. As one student said, "This class has made me consider a teaching career. . . . I think is it should be in every school." Even if this student's ultimate career choice is not education, the project has help him and all of the participants to understand better the role of the education enterprise in national development.

(e) Recommendations

Although, at this point, the data is insufficient, this project appears to have merit. More and better formative evaluation methods should be developed. Also, a system of follow-up is an essential element for the projects's assessment.

However, despite the lack of sufficient hard data, I recommend the continuation of this and similar projects. This is

essential to prepare a teaching force that reflects the face of The United States of America. A culturally diverse teaching profession is essential to the USA's national development and to its participation in global development.

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